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UNCLAS HARARE 001871

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR AF/S, AF/EX
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JFRAZER
LONDON FOR CGURNEY
PARIS FOR CNEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAGR ECON PHUM PGOV ZI

SUBJECT: NEW REPORTS OF FARM EVICTIONS

¶11. (SBU) Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) president David Hasluck called on Friday, August 16, to confirm several cases of farm eviction throughout the country. While the overall situation remains tense but superficially calm, there are scattered instances of official response to the farmers' refusal to recognize the GOZ's section 8 ultimatums.

¶12. (SBU) In Matebeleland South, six farmers -- including the CFU president for that region -- have reportedly received summonses to report to the local police station and clarify why they have not yet moved out of their homesteads. Five of the farmers are cattle ranchers, and one has a crop in the ground. All of the six farmers have received section 8 notices of compulsory acquisition, and all six have refused to move off their farms. According to Hasluck, all of the farmers were released on bail of Zim \$5,000 each (equivalent to US \$7.25 at the parallel rate) and remanded to September 6 for further proceedings.

¶13. (SBU) In Mashonaland Central, the police have reportedly been told that they are to begin evicting farmers from their land, although the police have not yet begun to follow this directive. It is unclear where this directive has originated.

¶14. (SBU) In Kwekwe, one farmer who has a 400 hectare crop of barley growing was forcibly evicted on Thursday by settlers on the farm. Although this was a settler-led action, the police were reportedly standing by and observing without offering assistance to the farmer. The farmer was allowed to return on Friday to tend his crop. Hasluck is attempting to contact the provincial governor, who in response to the food shortage had previously given permission for this farmer to plant his crop and had orally assured the farmer that he would be allowed to harvest. Hasluck hopes that an audience with the governor will rectify the situation, but the governor is currently unavailable and his whereabouts are unknown.

¶15. (SBU) Comment: Hasluck remains mystified, as do most other observers, as to what President Mugabe could have meant by his previous comments that loyal farmers will be allowed to continue farming, and that every farmer who wanted to farm would have land. It is possible that this is empty rhetoric along the lines of previous proclamations that no Zimbabwean farmer has been forced off his land. There is still little indication of what official GOZ reaction will be forthcoming in response to the farmers' refusal to leave their lands. What is certain is that an impasse has been reached, and unless an acceptable compromise is offered by one side or the other, confrontation -- whether violent or not -- is inevitable. End comment.

SULLIVAN